



Press Release

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\$33 Million Emancipation Park Renovation Project Will Celebrate the History of Oldest Park in the City of Houston *Groundbreaking Ceremony to be held on October 26, 2013*

Mayor Annise Parker, OST/Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority (TIRZ # 7), the Friends of Emancipation Park and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department will break ground on Emancipation Park's \$33 million project on October 26, 2013. Emancipation Park, one of Houston's most historically significant parks, is located at 3018 Dowling Street in Third Ward. The groundbreaking ceremony will take place at 11:00a.m.

"We are excited to begin the renovation of Emancipation Park," said Mayor Parker. "This project recognizes the foresight of the founding fathers who created this park. When completed, we expect Emancipation Park to be a place where people from across the nation will come to celebrate and learn about its history and the freedom it stands for."

In 1872, four former slaves, Reverend Jack Yates, Richard Brock, Reverend Elias Dibble and Richard Allen pooled together \$800 to buy 10 acres of land to create a park that they named Emancipation Park. Their goal was to create a place where emancipation from slavery could be celebrated. In 1918, the park became a city park. It received major renovations during the Works Progress Administration when a community center and pool were built. Additional renovations were made in the '70's, when a basketball pavilion was added. This new project will be the most significant since then.

"Emancipation Park has been a place for celebration and historic relevance for more than a hundred years. The improvements being planned will pay homage to that history," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We thank all of our funding partners for their support, especially the Kinder Foundation, Houston Endowment, the Timken Foundation, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Together with TIRZ # 7 and the Friends of Emancipation Park, they are helping us create a park that will honor the founding fathers and their vision."

The Freelon Group, along with M2L Associates, a local landscape architectural firm, is leading the design effort for the project. Philip Freelon, founder and President of the Freelon Group of Durham, North Carolina, was selected to design the renovation of Emancipation Park, in partnership with M2L Associates. Freelon Group projects include the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.; the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, and the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Emancipation Park Project partners include the OST/Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority (TIRZ # 7), the Friends of Emancipation Park, the Houston Parks Board, and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department. Funding for the project includes grants from the Kinder Foundation, Houston Endowment, the Timken Foundation, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,832 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.